

Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Communications Policy

Resolution

RESOLVED, that the Maryland Lynching Truth & Reconciliation Commission adopts a Communications Policy which does not allow Commission members to share their personal views on the mission, goals, policies and activities of the Commission without the prior approval of the Chair.

Background

The bylaws of the Commission stipulate that “the Chair speaks on behalf of the Commission.” To what extent should this provision be interpreted to prohibit other Commissioners from speaking to the press generally? Is this prohibition limited to official pronouncements intended to represent the Commission as an entity or an official body, or should it be interpreted more broadly? A draft communications policy is included below for discussion at the February 10, 2020 meeting. The policy suggests two contrasting approaches to the question of Commissioner interactions with the media (see point 4) for consideration.

Communications Policy

Members of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission have been selected for service based on their professional expertise, educational credentials, and experience related to the history and legacy of lynching in Maryland. Commissioner activities outside of their role on the Commission may include some or all of the following to contribute to the advancement of the body of knowledge of the history and legacy of lynching in Maryland:

- Remain current in the scholarly developments within their field(s); conduct original research, teach, and develop new scholarship.
- Develop and organize exhibitions.
- Acquire and curate collections.
- Contribute to programs and educational materials.
- Develop, author, or contribute to monographs, essays, articles, research papers, books, and other products of original thought.
- Represent their institution in the media, before legislative bodies, at public gatherings, and at professional conferences and seminars.

It is anticipated that Commissioners will continue to carry out these duties in their capacity as private individuals or representatives of their organizations/institutions while serving on the Commission. In order to avoid confusion regarding when a Commissioner is acting as private individual versus in his/her capacity as a representative of the Commission, Commissioners will recognize the following communication protocols:

1. The Chairman of the Commission serves as the official Commission spokesperson and conveys the official Commission position on issues related to the mission, goals, policies,

and activities of the Commission. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the Commission Chairman.

2. Depending on the specific circumstances, the Chairman may designate another Commissioner to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue.
3. In cases of critical significance to the Commission, the Chairman and Commission staff will work with other Commissioners to develop a "position paper" to detail the known facts of the situation and summarize the Commission's position.
4. Commission members are free to respond to requests from the media regarding their research, scholarship, teaching or professional expertise. Media inquiries should be referred to the Chairman if they involve issues associated with the mission, goals, policies, or activities of the Commission.